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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TIRANA 000112

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KV](#) [AL](#)  
SUBJECT: PM BERISHA ON KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE

REF: A. STATE 13716

[1](#)B. TIRANA 111  
[1](#)C. TIRANA 91

Classified By: Ambassador John L. Withers II, Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador engaged Prime Minister Berisha on February 12 on Albanian (and Kosovar) plans for an expected declaration of independence, including timing of recognition, possible GOA visits, and plans for celebrations. Berisha promised continued coordination with the U.S., has already urged Kosovo's leaders to maintain moderation, including in post-declaration celebrations, and agreed to delay immediate visits to Kosovo, but not indefinitely. In a separate meeting, opposition leader/Tirana Mayor Edi Rama indicated he was also contemplating an eventual post-declaration visit to Kosovo, but will respect our call for a delay. He added that Kosovo is not an issue for scoring partisan points, but a national triumph. END SUMMARY.

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RECOGNITION  
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[1](#)2. (C) Berisha reaffirmed Albania's intent to coordinate closely with the U.S. on recognition of Kosovo following an eventual declaration of independence (DI). He hinted that he expected the DI to occur the weekend of February 16-17. Ambassador suggested the U.S. would also not want to be the first to recognize, and we should both look for the large European nations (Germany, France, Italy, United Kingdom) to go first in the process. Berisha enthusiastically responded "then Albania and the U.S. can recognize together." Ambassador promised to try to give the PM an alert when Washington planned to act.

[1](#)3. (C) Berisha went on to explain that Albania recognized independent Kosovo in 1992. (Note: Embassy research showed the date of recognition was October 22, 1991. Albania withdrew its Embassy in the early 2000's, but has never rescinded recognition.) The PM is consulting with legal advisers, who have suggested, he said, that this recognition remains valid. Berisha said he asked President Sejdiu and Prime Minister Thaci whether Kosovo would prefer for Albania to "re-recognize" or simply to appoint a new ambassador. In any event, he assured Ambassador that any public statements would be coordinated with the Embassy.

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PLANNED CELEBRATIONS  
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[1](#)4. (C) Berisha told the Ambassador that Albania was again waiting clarification from Kosovo's leadership about the type of celebration to hold post-independence. One idea, he said,

was to proclaim independence "this weekend," but plan a more official celebration, with international invitees, later. "We will be in touch," he promised.

15. (C) Asked about non-official demonstrations, Berisha smiled and said Albanian people would certainly take to the streets, but that the celebrations would be "civilized." There would be no guns in Albania, he assured Ambassador. (Note: The PM was referring to the tradition of firing shots into the air, not to violence.) He expected fireworks and celebrations, but said Albania had not mobilized military or police forces. In separate meetings with police authorities, RSO was told police have been put on alert, but not mobilized. RSO contacts also said no violence was expected. The Police have formed an interagency task force, mainly to monitor the situation on the northern border points.

16. (C) Berisha added that if Serbia blockaded Kosovo, Albania would turn over a port to Kosovo's use. He said Albania would consider also giving Kosovo use of an airport, "although they have their own airport." All ports would work three shifts, according to the PM, and roads and "anything they need" would be at Kosovo's disposal.

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OFFICIAL VISITS  
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17. (C) The Ambassador noted USG concern that no official visits from Albania occur too soon after DI. He asked the PM to keep GOA officials back for a time, noting expected battles in the UN Security Council and possibly at the OSCE, in which the Russians and the Serbs might invoke the chimera of "Greater Albania." Berisha evinced understanding, but did not agree to an indefinite delay. In a separate meeting on February 12, Socialist Party leader and Tirana Mayor Edi Rama

TIRANA 00000112 002 OF 002

also indicated he would be considering a visit to a newly independent Kosovo. At the meeting, Ambassador urged Rama to avoid playing politics with any delay in recognition or other issues regarding Kosovo's DI. Rama agreed instantly.

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) We have no doubt that Albania will continue to work with us, particularly if we can give them as much advance information as possible about our plans. Berisha expressed the feelings of all Albanians when he said "This is a terrific moment in history." As Albanians always do, he credited the U.S. for the successful resolution of Kosovo status, and promised Albania would play as responsible and cooperative a role in the lead-up to Kosovar independence as it had in the past.

WITHERS